



Large Jail Network Bulletin

VINE: Jefferson County Corrections' System for Victim Notification

**by Joseph Payne,
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Mary Bryon of Jefferson County, Kentucky, met a tragic death on her twenty-first birthday in December 1993. Her death proved to be an impetus for a new Jefferson County program designed to protect crime victims.

Ms. Bryon was shot to death in her car as she left her job as a hairdresser at a local mall, allegedly by an ex-boyfriend who had been stalking her and had just been released from jail. The suspect had been in custody on charges of kidnapping and raping Ms. Bryon, and she was not aware of his release. This case prompted County Judge/Executive David L. Armstrong to call for a system for notifying victims when an offender is released from jail.

The Victim Information and Notification Everyday (VINE) system was established in response. The VINE system, the first of its kind in the nation, allows victims to register to be automatically notified when an inmate is to be released from or transferred within the

Jefferson County Corrections System.

Phone calls to VINE are answered by a state-of-the-art computer that relies on voice recognition to register victims who want to be notified about an assailant's release date. When the inmate is to be released, VINE automatically calls the registered victims, repeatedly if necessary, until they are contacted. The system begins calling a registered person every thirty minutes for twenty-four hours until the registered person enters a four-digit confirmation number established at the time of registration. In addition, the system sends a letter to the registered person that details the offender's change in status.

"It's the same technology that's used by banks to give people access to their account information, but it's the first time that it has ever been applied to provide services to victims," says Mike Davis, a marketing representative for Interactive Systems, the Louisville-based company that developed VINE.

Marcia Roth, Director of the Jefferson County Office for Women, says, "It is for anyone who wants information about an inmate-lawyers, family members, or victims.

We have found that domestic violence victims are using it the most, which is what we expected. We know that the person most likely to be at risk when someone is released from jail is the person in a relationship with the inmate."

VINE can provide callers with information and referrals to victims' services offered by the county and can also patch callers through to court and correctional officials. In addition, VINE can give information about any of the county's more than 2000 inmates, including their current status or court date, to anyone who calls into the system. Callers can obtain this information by using the inmate's police arrest number, inmate number, case number, or name. In addition to providing electronic access to information, VINE gives callers the option of speaking to a corrections staff person.

For additional information about the VINE program, please contact Betsy Helm at the Jefferson County Corrections Department, 730 West Main St., Suite 300, Louisville, Kentucky, 40202; telephone (502) 574-2167. ■